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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 35 of the Convention

List of issues in relation to the initial report of the Dominican Republic

Addendum

Replies of the Dominican Republic to the list of issues*

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Introduction

1. As requested by the communication from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Council on Disability (CONADIS) has drafted the replies to the list of issues sent by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/DOM/Q/1) following the submission of the initial report in 2011 in consultation with the other institutions concerned.

2. Much progress has now been made to include persons with disabilities, and the situation today is quite different from that described in the initial report.

3. The Government of the Dominican Republic thanks the Committee for its efforts and commitment to the implementation of the Convention and looks forward to receiving beneficial feedback that will help to further respect the rights of persons with disabilities in the country.

I. Purpose and general obligations (arts. 1–4)

A. Purpose (art. 1)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 1 of the list of issues

4. CONADIS has drawn up guidelines on proper terminology for use in referring to persons with disabilities; it has been widely circulated through both social media networks and print media in partnership with other State institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, the Office of the First Lady, the Dominican Consulate in New York, the Directorate-General of the Budget, the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations and the National Social Security Council, as well as through civil society organizations such as World Vision. This widespread dissemination and the discussions held during the International Book Fair, which takes place every year in the Dominican Republic, have had a huge impact.

5. Ongoing training activities are conducted in different sectors to promote the understanding that disability results from interaction with environmental barriers and to promote the use of appropriate language to refer to persons with disabilities. In particular, raising awareness about the use of proper terms is one of the main pillars of the Community-Based Inclusive Development Programme: Coming out of Hiding.

6. Action is also being taken to ensure that signs announcing services or priority treatment use appropriate symbols and language.

7. CONADIS is encouraging a regional and international campaign on the proper use of terminology, in coordination with disability agencies in Latin American countries.

8. In addition, an online course on disability, which addresses terminology as well as other general aspects of disability, has been developed in partnership with the Government of Ecuador and the Office of the Vice President of the Dominican Republic. The course will be run with support from the National Public Administration Institute (INAP), the body responsible for training civil servants. This will make it possible to train most civil service staff, with a particular focus on institutions in direct contact with the public.

B. General obligations (art. 4)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 of the list of issues

Progress in the adoption of the draft law on the national development strategy, END 2030

9. The National Development Strategy, END 2030, was the result of a comprehensive and participatory process to draw up a national plan, which ultimately led to the enactment of the Organic Act on the National Development Strategy of the Dominican Republic 2030 (Act No. 1-12) of 25 January 2012.

10. On 9 April 2014, the executive branch issued Decree No. 134-14 setting out the implementing regulations for Act No. 1-12. These regulations define all the steps involved in drafting policies and evaluating and updating plans and projects throughout the public sector. They also include all the technical specifications for the indicators to be used to assess the overall implementation of the National Development Strategy 2030.

The establishment of inclusion indicators for persons with disabilities in all areas of participation prioritized in the lines of action

11. The establishment of indicators for each of the aspects covered in the National Development Strategy's lines of action is closely linked to the development of a statistical system on disability. While no such indicators are currently included in the Strategy, the results of the ENHOGAR 2013 survey (which were formally released for dissemination in November 2014) will provide more accurate and reliable information with better thematic coverage.

12. The implementing regulations for the Strategy require proposals for the inclusion of new indicators or the amendment of existing ones to be submitted no later than 60 days before the annual April follow-up meeting. The information obtained through the ENHOGAR survey will provide the basis for a formal proposal to this effect for submission to the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Development and the National Office of Statistics (see also chap. III, sect. A, "Statistics and data collection").

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

13. With regard to these issues, the agenda of the National Congress of the Dominican Republic is gradually developing and amending cross-cutting legislation so as to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

14. The constitutional reform of 2010 added a new article 58 to the Constitution, which states as follows:

> Protection of persons with disabilities. The State shall promote, protect and ensure the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others as well as the full and independent exercise of their capacities. The State shall adopt the necessary positive measures to promote their family, community, social, occupational, economic, cultural and political integration.

15. The enactment of the Organic Act on the equality of rights of persons with disabilities (Act No. 5-13) constitutes the first step towards bringing existing legislation into line with the Convention and its Optional Protocol. The Convention is also the basis for the consultations on drafting implementing regulations for the Act.

16. The National Congress is currently considering the following proposals:

- The bill on sign language and Braille;
- The bill to amend the Civil Code;
- The establishment of a tripartite commission to review the Labour Code.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 of the list of issues

17. In accordance with the mandate established by Organic Act No. 5-13, a national consultation has been launched to establish and adopt implementing regulations for the Act.

18. Provincial consultations have been organized in coordination with the provincial governments, involving persons with disabilities and their families, civil society and provincial and local authorities.

19. A digital platform also enables all citizens to express their views on the implementing legislation for the Act.

20. The consultation process, which is key to creating a culture of rights for persons with disabilities by spreading information about the Act and the Convention, will conclude with the publicizing of the regulations among the government representatives who are responsible for implementing them.

II. Specific rights

A. Equality and non-discrimination (art. 5)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 of the list of issues

Measures adopted to prevent, eliminate and punish all forms of disability-based discrimination, including multiple and intersectional discrimination

21. Article 26 of Organic Act No. 5-13 on the equality of rights of persons with disabilities states as follows: "The duties of CONADIS shall include: ... ensuring the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities."[1]

22. The State, via CONADIS, has conducted various nationwide campaigns to increase recognition of the rights and guarantees enjoyed by persons with disabilities and their families. These campaigns rely on a plan to provide information and raise awareness of the rights and duties of persons with disabilities in conjunction with workshops to publicize Organic Act No. 5-13. The Act ranks higher in the legal order than its predecessor, Disability Act No. 42-00, because organic laws govern the organization and functioning of institutions established under the Constitution and, in the specific case of Act No. 5-13, regulate fundamental rights and guarantees.

23. The Organic Act takes precedence not only because of its constitutional status but also because it was enacted pursuant to an international convention ratified by the State, hence the movement to strengthen protection for the rights of persons with disabilities. The provisions of the Act are matters of public policy and social interest and are applicable throughout the country, and their main objective is to ensure the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families.

24. Non-discrimination is one of the general principles of Act No. 5-13 and is defined in article 4, paragraph 7, which states:

[1] Organic Act No. 5-13 on the equality of rights of persons with disabilities, art. 26.

> Discrimination on the basis of disability is any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

25. In addition, with respect to the family's responsibility, Act No. 5-13 provides that: "if, despite receiving or having access to support services or information from the State, a person's natural family or foster family restricts opportunities for its family members with disabilities to integrate, or discriminates against them, a complaint may be filed against the family with the Office of the Public Prosecutor or the relevant courts."[2]

26. The Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office of the Dominican Republic was established for the purpose of ensuring respect for the fundamental rights of Dominican citizens. The Unit provides guidance to all interested parties, including persons with disabilities, on the protection of their rights. The Legal Assistance Unit of CONADIS plays a similar role, with a focus on respect for the rights of persons with disabilities and their families.

27. With respect to the workplace, the Ministry of Labour, as the body responsible for labour policies in the Dominican Republic, has developed a "Strategic Guide on Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination" that aims to spread awareness of the standards that require action to be taken to narrow the gaps created by discrimination; it has also prepared an awareness-raising campaign on inequality in the workplace to accompany the Guide.

28. A human rights approach towards persons with disabilities is currently being adopted within the judicial system, but no analyses of multiple or intersectional discrimination have yet been carried out.

The number of prosecutions and convictions carried out under article 336 of the Criminal Code in cases of discrimination against persons with disabilities and on redress mechanisms for victims

29. No information is available on this subject. Nevertheless, victims of such criminal offences may become civil parties in the criminal proceedings. These civil actions, which may consist of a claim for redress for damages, must be filed during the criminal proceedings.

Regulation of the provision of reasonable accommodation

30. With respect to protection for persons with disabilities, the Constitution of the Dominican Republic requires the State to "promote, protect and ensure the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others as well as the full and independent exercise of their capacities". It is thus the Constitution itself that, at first instance, imposes the requirement to take the necessary steps to ensure the enjoyment or exercise of such rights and freedoms by persons with disabilities on an equal basis, which thus includes reasonable accommodation.[3]

31. On the basis of this requirement to provide "reasonable accommodation", a number of situations have been identified that have led to closer collaboration between CONADIS and other State institutions to review their procedures in various areas so as to effectively guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities, as required under Organic Act No. 5-13 on the equality of rights of persons with disabilities, which states that "CONADIS shall seek to ensure that public and private institutions make reasonable accommodation in order to

[2] Ibid., Organic Act No. 5-13 on the equality of rights of persons with disabilities, art. 132.
[3] Constitution of the Dominican Republic, art. 59.

equalize job opportunities for persons with disabilities" (Organic Act No. 5-13 on the equality of rights of persons with disabilities, art. 4).

32. The aforementioned Act also defines "affirmative action", as "measures aimed at offsetting, preventing or compensating for disadvantages faced by persons with disabilities and their families that hinder their inclusion and full participation in all aspects of daily life, taking into consideration the various types and degrees of disability" (Organic Act No. 5-13 on the equality of rights of persons with disabilities, art. 4).

33. The State, through all the stakeholders in the justice system, has adopted the Brasilia Regulations regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People, and, in the spirit of those regulations adopted by the supreme courts of justice throughout Latin America, various orders have been issued and actions carried out with a view to removing barriers. These include actions taken in the areas of accessibility – by modifying and adapting buildings in accordance with the relevant standards — and communication — by providing sign language interpreters and using interview centres to make it easier for victims or witnesses of crimes or offences to testify.

B. Women with disabilities (art. 6)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 of the list of issues

The existing mechanisms for the protection of the rights of women with disabilities and how those mechanisms have been included in general policies on equal opportunities for women in relation to men

34. The country's legal framework includes mechanisms that regulate protection of the rights of men and women with disabilities under various legal instruments, such as:

- The Constitution of the Dominican Republic, in articles 39, 58 and 60;
- Act No. 1-12 on the National Development Strategy, which sets out the long-term vision for the country whose implementation will make it possible to achieve the objectives of national planning. Article 23 of the Act, which sets out general and specific objectives and lines of action, addresses protection for women with disabilities:
    - General objective 2.1: Quality education for all;
    - General objective 2.2: Comprehensive health-care and social security coverage;
    - General objective 2.5: Decent housing in healthy surroundings;
- Act No. 24-97 amending the Dominican Criminal Code, which criminalizes violence against women, domestic violence and family violence, particularly in articles 303, 304, 309, 331, 333 and 336;
- Act No. 88-03 establishing shelters, an instruction manual and regulation No. 1518-04 on implementation and operation. The Act provides that persons with disabilities shall be temporarily cared for at the shelters and then referred to the Ministry of Health, which shall take responsibility for them;
- Act No. 136-03, Code for the System of Protection and Fundamental Rights of Children and Adolescents, specifically principle IV on equality and non-discrimination;
- Act No. 87-01, on the Dominican Social Security System, which includes several articles on the participation, duties and rights of women with disabilities;

- Act No. 66-97, the General Act on Education, articles 48 and 49 of which provide that conditions should be created that foster the provision of special education and appropriate treatment;

- Act No. 42-01, the General Act on Health, which includes articles 28, 29, 30, 31, 86, 87 and 157.

35. The Women with Disabilities Circle (CIMUDIS) has begun working in cooperation with the Ministry for Women to monitor the implementation of article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in order to establish coordination mechanisms that directly promote the socioeconomic inclusion of women with disabilities in the Dominican Republic.

Inclusion of women with disabilities in the programmes of the Ministry for Women and in the National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity 2007–2017

36. Civil society organizations have undertaken the following actions with regard to gender and in support of the National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity 2007–2017:

- Various activities have been carried out to publicize the Plan, such as discussions, workshops and seminars;

- An inter-institutional cooperation agreement was signed in 2005 between the Women with Disabilities Circle and the State Secretariat for Women (now the Ministry for Women) on actions to include women with disabilities in training programmes, leadership processes, advice on combating violence, human rights training, political training and other activities.

37. Through this agreement, the Ministry for Women undertakes to provide legal advice and psychological support to all members of the Women with Disabilities Circle affected by acts of violence and to provide the educational materials needed for training purposes.

C. Children with disabilities (art. 7)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 7 of the list of issues

38. The Supreme Court has issued ruling No. 3687-2007, which provides for the adoption of minimum rules of procedure, while also establishing a protocol on the operation of the interview centre for vulnerable victims and witnesses of crime. The centre is managed by the Department of Families, Children, Young People and Gender and was established by the judiciary to address the problems of child abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking in persons and other crimes in an environment suited to the needs of child or adolescent victims and witnesses; the centre has special features such as Gesell chambers (rooms with one-way mirrors) or closed circuit television that make it possible to observe, listen to and digitally record their statements for use as evidence in criminal proceedings, thereby ensuring protection of and full respect for their rights.

39. What began as a pilot project with children and adolescents was expanded through resolution No. 116 of 2010, which broadened the remit of the interview centres to cover all vulnerable population groups. There are interview centres in the National District, San Cristóbal and Santiago, with more soon to open in Puerto Plata, Samaná and Mao.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 of the list of issues

40. The National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI), through its Shelters Unit, provides temporary residential care in shelters to children and adolescents who are at personal, family or social risk, either because the social and emotional bonds with their

families have been broken or because those bonds pose a temporary threat to their development. The Shelters Unit also provides comprehensive care to children and adolescents who, due to exposure to neglect, physical violence or emotional abuse, require State protection. They are subsequently returned to their families of origin or their extended family, thus helping to ensure the right of all children and adolescents to a home and a family for their development and well-being.

41. CONANI currently runs eight shelters, including:

- The Arroyo Hondo Shelter, which is primarily for children 5 years of age or younger;
- The Costa Verde Shelter, which cares for boys ranging from 6 to 13 years of age;
- The La Fe Shelter, which cares for boys ranging from 13 to 18 years of age;
- The Jarabacoa Shelter, which currently cares primarily for children of 6 to 18 years of age;
- The Santiago Shelter, which cares for boys ranging from 6 to 13 years of age.

42. The Shelters Unit adopts a professional intervention strategy for children and adolescents with severe disabilities and who live in extreme poverty or come from low-income families, and especially those who have been abandoned by their families. Children with the following conditions are cared for: motor disabilities, intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, brain damage from Kernicterus, measles syndrome, sequelae of meningitis, sequelae of poliomyelitis,[4] autism and hydrocephalus.

D. Awareness-raising (art. 8)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

43. The following initiatives have been taken:

- **Coming out of Hiding**. This community-based inclusive development programme seeks to identify persons with disabilities throughout the country and their needs in their communities. It entails establishing an agenda for full inclusion involving, inter alia, persons with disabilities, local governments, local representatives of the central Government, community organizations, schools, churches and local media. A programme of work is drawn up with those stakeholders that includes awareness-raising and training workshops, identifying needs for technical support to enable the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and an information day attended by the entire community and its leaders, with activities such as guided walks, sport displays and art exhibitions by persons with disabilities. Local and national media are invited to the events and then convey the messages of the programme and spread the word about progress towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities and violations of their rights. The programme is carried out by CONADIS and has so far reached 43 of the poorest and most marginalized communities in the country;
- **The CONADIS Newsletter**. This communication tool has helped greatly to spread messages from the Council and publicize its activities using low-cost, digital tools. The newsletter is issued twice monthly and is sent to State institutions (specifically to their communication departments), institutions for persons with disabilities,

[4] The country is taking definitive steps to eliminate poliomyelitis. Vaccination campaigns are ongoing, and the last reported outbreak occurred in 2001. The goal is to declare the country free of polio by 2018.

national and international partners and national and local media. It is also posted on the Council's social media pages so that the general public can easily download it;

- **Life stories**. This initiative sprung from the need to change attitudes towards persons with disabilities among the general population, replacing charity with a rights-based approach. Most of the population is unaware of how society makes life difficult for persons with disabilities. For this and many other reasons, an initiative was launched to conduct short "documentary" interviews showing the reality experienced by persons with disabilities who have overcome barriers and succeeded in integrating themselves into society, studying, working, opening businesses, starting families, distinguishing themselves in sports or in the arts and contributing to society;

- **Campaign to encourage the use of correct terminology to refer to persons with disabilities**. Together with other State institutions, media outlets and regional communications trade unions, CONADIS is preparing educational workshops to teach people the appropriate terms for use when referring to persons with disabilities and about the benefits and drawbacks of properly using the correct terms. Documents on the subject are also being printed for mass distribution to the general public.

E. Accessibility (art. 9)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 of the list of issues

44. The National Accessibility Plan is a strategy implemented by CONADIS in keeping with its role as the lead agency for disability issues. The Plan seeks to involve other State institutions in promoting the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political and civic life by establishing fully accessible and inclusive participative environments. For this purpose, several meetings have been held with public institutions and with civil society to reach agreement on the basic ideas, strategies and initiatives that should be included in the Plan — which is to be implemented throughout the country — as well as its scope.

45. The following meetings have been held for this purpose:

- Two information-gathering meetings attended by various institutions and ministries (including the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Communication, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Culture, municipal governments, the Dominican Federation of Municipalities and groupings of municipalities);

- Two meetings with institutions working in the field of transport, with the aim of seeking an alternative or strategy that would make transport more accessible to persons with disabilities.

46. At the local level, municipal accessibility plans are being prepared taking into account the local situation in each municipality and in consultation with locally represented bodies and municipal authorities; various initiatives that focus on amending decisions and budget items in the participatory budget are encouraged so as to incorporate basic aspects of universal accessibility:

- The inclusion of universal accessibility specifications in the various construction projects funded through the participatory budget;

- The modification of physical facilities and internal processes to facilitate access to municipal services for persons with disabilities;

- The establishment of a municipal plan to remove barriers;
- The amendment of municipal decisions, when necessary, to include universal accessibility specifications.

47. This plan will initially be implemented as a pilot project in the following five municipalities, which were chosen by the CONADIS technical team on the basis of their size and degree of political acceptance: Miches (eastern region), Guayubín (northern region), Santo Domingo Este (greater Santo Domingo), Sabana Grande de Boyá (central region) and El Cercado (southern region).

Construction

48. With regard to construction, an agreement between CONADIS and the Directorate-General for Purchasing and Public Procurement provides the basis for the inclusion of accessibility specifications as an integral part of the Directorate-General's standard calls for tender for construction projects, with a view to bringing all public construction projects into line with accessibility requirements.

49. CONADIS has intervened in the following construction projects to ensure that accessibility is guaranteed:

- The Ministry of Education national school buildings programme, which involves the construction of 28,000 new classrooms that are closely monitored to ensure that physical accessibility is guaranteed in all school buildings and that technology and materials adapted to different disability needs are provided;
- The Ministry of Education project to remodel and expand schools;
- The Ministry of Education project to carry out minor repairs in 863 classrooms in 91 schools in various regions of the country;
- The Ministry of Sports project to renovate 50 sports facilities;
- The National Housing Institute housing construction project;
- The Armed Forces Boca Cachón Housing Complex Project, which consists of 537 homes and was inaugurated last April. The project is an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable "green village" where the full mobility needs of persons with disabilities are given priority;
- The project to rebuild "La Nueva Barquita", which is being spearheaded by the Office of the President and is intended to change the lives of more than 1,200 low-income families that have suffered from floods and overcrowding for generations. This project includes the construction of 34 apartment buildings, in which 1 out of every 16 apartments will be fully accessible and will be designed in accordance with the local regulations on removing architectural barriers;
- The refurbishment of the Community Technology Centres by the Office of the Vice-President;
- The review of the construction plans for day-care centres, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, in order to ensure accessibility. Monitoring is being carried out with the Office of Supervising Engineers for Public Works Projects;
- The Ministry of Tourism is currently carrying out a project to refurbish the colonial area of Santo Domingo and is ensuring that accessibility standards are included;
- CONADIS has overseen the design and model for the Ciudad Juan Bosch project in order to ensure its accessibility. This project will involve the construction of 25,000 apartments, several multipurpose buildings, hospitals, schools, churches, sports

centres, recreation centres and a large urban area with a series of ramps connecting all areas of the project. The design of the project took into account the need for all buildings and their surrounding urban environment to be accessible. One apartment in every block of 16 will be accessible, meaning that a total of 1,600 accessible apartments will be built. CONADIS is monitoring and overseeing the construction to ensure the project's accessibility;

- The Santo Domingo metro is the only means of mass transportation with a high level of accessibility. There are two lines: line 1, which has 16 stations, and line 2, which has 14 stations. All stations are equipped with elevators, and some are equipped with access ramps running from the outside entrance to the train platforms, so that persons with disabilities can use the network without difficulty. Metro stations are equipped with both stairways and escalators, and tactile slabs have been placed on the floor to guide the blind. CONADIS has trained and advised all members of the Metro Special Security Unit on proper treatment of persons with disabilities who use this major mode of transport.

Information and communications technology

50. Several meetings were held with the Dominican Institute of Telecommunications to follow up on the installation of new computer training centres in institutions for persons with disabilities and the upgrading of equipment in the CONADIS computer training centre.

51. The new, A3 version of the NORTIC regulation issued by the Presidential Office for Information and Communication Technologies includes general provisions on the content and accessibility of State websites. This regulation seeks to ensure accessibility and uniformity among all web portals maintained by public institutions. As part of the implementation of the National Literacy Plan "*Quisqueya Aprende Contigo*" (Quisqueya learns with you), suitable aids have been created to facilitate the inclusion of persons with visual and hearing disabilities.

Training

52. In addition to the actions described above, training on universal accessibility continues to be provided to persons working in the field of construction. About 200 people have been trained and more than 40 workshops held on universal accessibility; these have been attended by community leaders, civil servants and construction professionals throughout the country and are a strategic part of the Coming out of Hiding programme. So far, in 2014 alone more than 3,000 persons have been trained. Some 240 administrative staff and employees of hotels in the eastern region of the country have also received training.

F. Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (art. 11)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 of the list of issues

53. The Emergency Operations Centre's protocols are based on the principle that all persons have the right to an adequate standard of living that ensures their and their families' health and well-being in the event of an emergency. For this reason, sign language is now being used as a means of improving alerts and information for persons with hearing impairments. All information and prevention bulletins include sign language interpreters.

54. Campaigns have been conducted to identify homes where persons with disabilities live in order to facilitate the implementation of emergency protocols. In some cases, for example, in the town of Miches, these homes have been included in local risk maps.

G. Equal recognition before the law (art. 12)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 of the list of issues

55. The Senate is currently considering a bill to amend the Civil Code, although it does not include the amendments referred to in the list of issues. The National Council on Disability (CONADIS) is taking steps to address this and similar issues.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues

56. The State party has no information on this issue.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 14 of the list of issues

57. Recently, the Monetary and Financial Authority ordered the publication of a proposed amendment to the regulations on protection for users of financial services, adopted in Monetary Board decision No. 10 of 19 January 2006, which establishes "equal, non-discriminatory and non-abusive treatment" as one of the guiding principles of the regulations. In other words, financial products and services should be provided on a non-discriminatory basis to all users, with such exceptions as might arise from policies based on risk factors.

58. The proposed amendment also states that financial intermediation and exchange entities must not include terms that are deemed "unfair" by the Office of the Superintendent of Banks in their contracts. Examples of unfair terms include discrimination on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, disability, economic, social or political status.

59. Moreover, in 2006, in circular No. 011/06, the Office of the Superintendent of Banks instructed financial intermediation entities to take the necessary steps to bring their organizations and policies into line with the objectives of Act No. 352-98 on protection of elderly persons that was enacted on 15 August 1998. Financial intermediation and exchange entities are thus required to provide service points, priority seating and other facilities for the exclusive use of persons with disabilities, pregnant women and elderly persons who require their financial services.

60. The Office of the Superintendent of Banks is in the process of identifying measures needed to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to products and services offered by financial intermediation and exchange entities with a view to their implementation. CONADIS has submitted a proposal in this regard, which is currently being evaluated.

61. The Asociación Popular de Ahorros y Préstamos (APAP) has begun offering financial services for deaf persons by making such services accessible via sign language. It is developing this new service in collaboration with APEC University, which offers sign language instruction to businesspeople and managers, and with support from the Asociación Nacional de Sordos (National Association of Deaf Persons) (ANSORDO). The project is initially being implemented in over half the Association's branches and will later be extended to all the remaining branches once the second group of staff have received training from APEC University.

H. Access to justice (art. 13)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 of the list of issues

Measures implemented in the justice system to ensure that persons with disabilities have full and effective access to actions, functions or stages of the process

62. Various measures have been taken to provide persons with disabilities with full and effective access to the justice system. These measures include the recruitment of sign language specialists to facilitate communication in criminal proceedings and the establishment of interview centres for persons in vulnerable situations as victims or witnesses of crimes.

63. With regard to architectural barriers, a number of facilities throughout the country have at least ramps providing access to the ground floor. Accessibility is taken into account when constructing new buildings and renovating old ones.

64. Suitable signage, as well as access ramps, comfortable waiting areas, accessible toilets, wide corridors and lifts are being installed.

65. These modifications are in line with the Brasilia Regulations regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People, adopted at the Fourteenth Meeting of the Latin American Judicial Summit, which was held in March 2008 and attended by the Dominican Republic. These regulations seek to "overcome, eliminate or mitigate" obstacles to access to justice for persons in vulnerable situations.

Capacity-building programmes for the judiciary on the rights of persons with disabilities, reasonable accommodations and adaptation of the judicial process

66. The National School for the Judiciary has been using Braille to teach persons with visual impairments, including two persons who have qualified as public defenders.

I. Liberty and security of the person (art. 14)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

Information on the existence of homes and hospitals where persons with disabilities are institutionalized for long periods of time or permanently

67. The public health-care network provides services in several hospitals throughout the country (the Robert Reid Cabral, Moscoso Puello, Dario Contreras, Ney Arias Lora, Vinicio Calventi and Padre Billini hospitals, as well as hospitals in La Vega, Puerto Plata and San Pedro de Macoris, and the Gualey Mental Health Centre, which operates as a home during the day).

68. Non-profit organizations (such as the Hogar Vida y Esperanza and homes for the elderly) receive funding and support from the staff of the Ministry of Public Health and provide care for persons with disabilities.

69. CONANI has an Angels Programme that adopts a human rights-based approach to provide care for children and adolescents with severe disabilities. The programme provides special care and support to children and adolescents with severe disabilities, particularly those from low-income families. Its aim is to provide comprehensive care, encourage social and family integration, and make the Home, in the medium to long term, a model for specialized care for such children and adolescents, using a human rights-based approach

that involves the family and the community. The Programme provides ongoing care and support to children and adolescents with severe disabilities.

70. The Angels Home, which is run by CONANI, seeks to safeguard and protect the rights of children and adolescents with disabilities in order to ensure their well-being. It aims to provide comprehensive care to all children and adolescents referred to it who have disabilities and live in extreme poverty. The broad mandate of the Home is regulated by the National Office that oversees it. The Home's staff promote and comply with the established regulations on child and adolescent care and protection. They provide the children and adolescents with fair, warm and responsible care and ensure that they live in a healthy and pleasant environment.

71. The Home provides care to children and adolescents with disabilities who are from low-income families or have been abandoned by their families. It provides care to children with the following conditions:

- Psychomotor retardation;
- Intellectual disabilities;
- Cerebral palsy;
- Down syndrome;
- Brain damage from kernicterus;
- Meningitis;
- Autism;
- Hydrocephalus; and
- Post-polio syndrome.

Independent authority supervising such institutions

72. As the governing body of the national child and adolescent protection system, CONANI is responsible for guaranteeing the fundamental rights of children and adolescents throughout the country and has a technical and administrative monitoring unit that oversees all programmes for children and adolescents.

J. Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art. 15)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 of the list of issues

73. The Directorate-General for Drugs and Pharmacies of the Ministry of Public Health has set up an advisory committee on cell therapy, which is developing regulations on stem cell use and therapy to treat diseases for which clinical trials have shown the treatment's effectiveness and safety.

74. All research involving humans is subject to approval by the National Council on Bioethics (CONABIOS) under the Ministry of Public Health.

K. Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (art. 16)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 of the list of issues

Data on women with disabilities, boys and girls with disabilities and older persons with disabilities, particularly intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, who have been victims of violence, abuse or exploitation, and the existing safeguards to protect them from those types of violations to their human rights

75. With regard to the services provided by the Ministry for Women, only two cases of persons with disabilities at the model shelter have been reported: one involving a woman with two children in 2010 and another involving a woman and her daughter in 2013.

76. The Ministry for Women has a 24-hour helpline that was set up in June 2012 with a view to reducing femicide. The helpline has a dispatch centre that receives calls 24 hours day, 7 days a week, and 12 rescue vehicles patrol the country ready to respond to calls put through by the 24-hour dispatch centre. Rescue teams consist of a driver and a qualified professional (such as the head of the Provincial Office for Women or the Municipal Office for Women, a psychologist or lawyer) and an officer from the national police and work in coordination with operators and rescuers from the National Safety and Emergency Response System (911).

77. The National Prevention and Support Programme on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence provides psychological and legal support in 52 provincial and municipal offices for women and the prevention department that is based in the Ministry for Women itself.

78. Services in shelters: The Ministry for Women has three shelters: a model shelter, an emergency shelter, and a shelter that is being opened. The model shelter can accommodate 12 women and their children under the age of 14, or approximately 40 persons at full occupancy, while the emergency shelter can accommodate 4 women and their children, or approximately 16 persons.

79. Shelters provide, inter alia, food, clothing, health and personal hygiene services, psychological assessment and support, legal assistance, occupational therapy and social work.

80. In 2012 and 2013, the legal division of the National Council for Older Persons (CONAPE) received, through the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic, a total of 320 cases of older persons who had filed various types of complaints regarding abuse and/or ill-treatment. Of those complaints, 63 senior citizens (or 19.7 per cent of complainants) had some form of disability, and 23 had filed more than two complaints. In 2014, only four cases were received.

81. Older persons with physical disabilities accounted for 23.3 per cent of the cases, followed by those with Alzheimer's at 17.4 per cent. Moreover, family conflicts, psychological abuse and physical abuse were most common among persons with Alzheimer's disease and were reported in 24, 22 and 18 cases, respectively. Act No. 352-98 on protection of older persons establishes safeguards for older persons with disabilities who are victims of violence, abuse or exploitation. Preventive measures involve talks and campaigns to raise awareness about the fundamental rights of older persons.

Accessibility of shelters for women who have been victims of violence and sign language interpretation in protection institutions

82. Shelters and the Centre for the Promotion of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health under the National Adolescent Pregnancy Plan, sponsored by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), are designed to be accessible.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

83. Few such instances have been reported to the National Council for Older Persons (CONAPE). However, when the Council is aware of such cases, it receives the complaint and then conducts an investigation. Should the investigation uncover incriminating evidence, the Council prepares a report and refers the perpetrator(s) to the Public Prosecution Service and the relevant courts so that they may be sanctioned in accordance with the law.

84. CONADIS has not received any such complaints, but is currently conducting a study to identify measures that will help to prevent such situations.

L. Protecting the integrity of the person (art. 17)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

Measures implemented by the State party to prevent forced sterilization and forced medical treatment, in particular, forced psychiatric treatment

85. There are technical regulations, guidelines and protocols that define the relevant procedures, which respect the integrity and rights of persons.

86. Act No. 12-06 on mental health clearly establishes that the treatment should be voluntary, as well as the relevant legal procedure in the absence of consent. The Ministry of Health is in the process of disseminating and raising awareness of the Act.

87. In order to prevent forced sterilization, informed consent is required, and the patient's signature is needed to authorize the sterilization.

Existing mechanisms to ensure the free and informed consent of the person concerned to any type of medical treatment

88. The Ministry of Health is training hospital management to raise awareness of the concept and the appropriate procedure. The requirement of informed consent has been extended, and awareness campaigns are being conducted to ensure compliance by physicians.

M. Living independently and being included in the community (art. 19)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 21 of the list of issues

89. CONADIS has been implementing the Coming Out of Hiding Programme to promote community-based inclusive development. The Programme encourages the empowerment and participation of various sectors: community leaders, persons with disabilities, churches, local governments and local representatives of the central Government who, with support from CONADIS, develop strategies to enable persons with disabilities to be included and participate independently in community life. The Programme includes:

- Training;
- Awareness-raising;
- Social mobilization; and
- Developing and overseeing the Community Agenda for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.

90. To date, the Programme has been implemented in 46 communities throughout the country, giving priority to the poorest and most isolated areas.

91. Civil society has provided support for persons with disabilities, their families and communities through the project on the right of persons with disabilities in the Dominican Republic to a full life: Equal Opportunities, Different Abilities (2012–2014). The project has worked with 100 families from various communities. The proposal arose from the need to help persons with disabilities exercise their rights to empowerment and public participation, promoting equality between women and men in the greater Santo Domingo area and in Las Matas de Farfán and Azua in the southern region.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 22 of the list of issues

92. The Family Placement Programme (PAF) is one of the most significant and eagerly awaited developments in the protection system. It promotes the right of every child and adolescent to live in a family environment; ensures that children and adolescents are institutionalized for increasingly short periods and less often and develops a strategy to help families overcome the factors that led to their separation from their children. The guidelines are included in Act No. 136-03 under the heading of "family placement".

93. In accordance with article 476 of the Act, "the placement of a child or adolescent in a substitute family is a protective measure to be imposed in exceptional cases, by means of which a family assumes the obligation of feeding and educating the child or adolescent, treating him or her properly, and helping him or her to perform his or her duties".

94. Moreover, all children and adolescents are protected by the Act, under its Principle IV, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, age, language, thought, conscience, religion, belief, culture, political or other opinion, economic status, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, sickness, birth, exposure to risk or any other condition pertaining to the children or adolescents, or to their parents, representatives, guardians or their relatives. Although the Family Placement Programme is not specifically for the benefit of children and adolescents with disabilities, it does not exclude them. The Programme is for the benefit of children and adolescents who are between the ages of 8 and 14 when first admitted to the programme and is open to children and adolescents with and without disabilities.

95. The Substitute Family Programme is a new scheme that breaks with the paradigms of the past and favours a "natural family" environment where children and adolescents, without any discrimination, are safe, receive personalized care and affection or comprehensive care, and are considered to have rights. The Programme offers another means of restoring the right to family life and preventing institutionalization.

96. CONANI is currently operating the pilot phase of the Family Placement Programme, which involves establishing the Family Bank (the first step in the Family Placement Programme). The areas that have been selected for the pilot phase are: Santiago de los Caballeros (northern region), San Pedro de Macorís (eastern region), Los Alcarrizos, Boca Chica (greater Santo Domingo) and Villa Altagracia (southern region).

N. Freedom of expression and opinion and access to information (art. 21)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 23 of the list of issues

Information on whether Dominican sign language is recognized as an official language

97. Article 29 of the Constitution of the Dominican Republic states that the official language is Spanish. However, with the enactment of Act No. 5-13, the State is moving towards the adoption of the bill on sign language and Braille, one of the aims of which is to establish sign language as an official language for persons with hearing impairments. At present, the bill has been approved by the Chamber of Deputies and is scheduled for introduction and approved by the Senate.

Information on the existence of a career for sign language interpreters and the number of certified sign language interpreters in the State party

98. Sign language courses are included in the curricula of some university undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, such as psychology and Masters in psychopedagogy with a focus on diversity. Moreover, universities conduct workshops, courses and diploma courses, such as the sign language course offered by the Ibero-American University (UNIBE), the sign language as a language diploma course offered by the National Evangelical University (UNEV) and the sign language diploma course offered by APEC University.

99. In 2014, the first sign language certifications, approved by the National Association of Deaf Persons (ANSORDO), the National Association of Interpreters (ANILESRED) and CONADIS were awarded to 35 interpreters. In this connection, a proposal to declare a national day of sign language interpretation was made.

100. The National Institute of Technical and Vocational Training (INFOTEP), in collaboration with CONADIS, has begun training public servants in sign language in order to help persons with hearing impairments access services provided by public institutions autonomously and independently. To date, 20 individuals from 15 different public institutions have been trained.

O. Education (art. 24)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 24 of the list of issues

Disaggregated data on children and young persons with disabilities registered in the national inclusive education system and in special education schools at all levels of education

101. At the pre-primary level, a total of 2,894 children with disabilities were identified, 1,549 (53.5 per cent) of whom were boys and 1,345 (46.5 per cent) girls. At the primary level, 37,860 pupils with some form of disability were identified, 21,332 (56.3 per cent) of whom were boys and 16,528 (43.7 per cent) girls. At the secondary level, a total of 6,152 pupils with some form of disability were identified, 2,160 (35.1 per cent) of whom were boys and 3,992 (64.9 per cent) girls. The figures for university should be viewed with caution, as they refer to children and adolescents under the age of 19. Nevertheless, 280 university students with some form of disability were identified, all of whom were women. Moreover, 262 students in special literacy programmes had some form of disability, 82 (31.3 per cent) of whom were men and 180 (68.7 per cent) of whom were women.

102. The following disaggregated data were obtained by the Directorate of Special Education of the Ministry of Education (MINERD) through a study conducted in 2013 on the number of students with disabilities and on the number of mainstream and special education schools that enrol such students (source: survey on the national education system 2013):

- Percentage of schools that reported students with signs of disabilities:
  - 42 per cent yes;
  - 45 per cent no;
  - 13 per cent no response.
- Type of education provided in schools that reported students with signs of disabilities:
  - 72 per cent mainstream education;
  - 28 per cent special education.
- Schools willing to include students with disabilities:
  - 23 per cent yes;
  - 22 per cent no;
  - 55 per cent no response.
- Breakdown according to school sector:
  - 78 per cent public;
  - 20 per cent private;
  - 2 per cent semi-private.
- Breakdown of disability support institutions identified by schools:
  - 33.1 per cent Asociación Dominicana de Rehabilitación (Dominican Association for Rehabilitation);
  - 12.8 per cent Centro Atención a la Diversidad (Centre for Diversity) (CAD)
  - 11.5 per cent National Council for Children;
  - 10.8 per cent Centro de Recursos Olga Estrella (Olga Estrella Resource Centre);
  - 5.7 per cent Asociación Dominicana de Síndrome de Down (Dominican Down Syndrome Association);
  - 5.1 per cent Escuela Nacional de Sordos (National School for Deaf Persons);
  - 5 per cent Instituto de Ayuda al Sordo (Institute for Assistance to Deaf Persons);
  - 5 per cent National Council on Disability;
  - 3.6 per cent Fundación Dominicana del Autismo (Dominican Autism Foundation);
  - 7.4 per cent other.

- Students with signs of disabilities: breakdown according to sex:
    - 61 per cent male;
    - 39 per cent female.
- Students with signs of disabilities: breakdown by age group:
    - 1.5 per cent 0–5 years;
    - 82.9 per cent 6–15 years;
    - 13 per cent 16–20 years;
    - 2.6 per cent over 21 years.
- Students with signs of disabilities: breakdown according to level of education:
    - 4.2 per cent pre-primary;
    - 77.4 per cent primary;
    - 9.1 per cent secondary;
    - 1.6 per cent special pre-primary;
    - 5.7 per cent special primary.
- Breakdown according to type of disability identified:
    - 50.3 per cent intellectual;
    - 24.5 per cent visual;
    - 8.3 per cent physical;
    - 7.5 per cent hearing;
    - 4.3 per cent multiple;
    - 5.1 per cent unidentified.

103. It should be noted that these findings are from the first phase of research and refer to students with signs of disabilities reported by schools. The second phase involves the use of more specific assessments by teams from the Centre for Diversity (CAD) to ascertain whether any persons with disabilities are enrolled in the schools, but the data is not yet available.

Information on whether there are plans for children and adults with disabilities in special schools to transition to the inclusive education system and how reasonable accommodation is provided in mainstream education

104. The Dominican Republic has 31,198 students with disabilities enrolled in mainstream and special education. Special education is intended for students with major or multiple disabilities, in accordance with Departmental Order No. 04-2008.

Table 1
Number of students with disabilities, according to type/level of education

Mainstream education			*Special education*				
Pre-primary	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Adult*	*Pre-primary*	*Primary*	*Adult literacy programme*	***Total***
1 122	20 631	2 418	527	110	5 807	583	**31 198**

- Pre-primary education: mandatory as from the age of 5 (pre-primary);
- Primary education: years one to eight (eight years divided into two cycles of four years);
- Secondary education: years one to four (four years divided into two cycles of two years);
- Adult education: subsystem with all previous levels.

Percentage of mainstream educational facilities that are accessible

105. The Dominican Republic is firmly committed to providing quality education. Under the direction of President Danilo Medina Sánchez and the Minister of Education, the National School Building Programme is under way. It built 10,000 classrooms in 2014 and will build 18,000 new classrooms and refurbish 13,000 by 2016 and include a dining area and a kitchen on all school premises.

106. The new schools are designed to be accessible to students with disabilities.

107. It should be noted that according to data provided by the Directorate of Planning of the Ministry of Education the ground floor of every school built since 2008 is accessible.

108. Accessibility regulations and standards were taken into account in the school building plans of the National School Building Programme, launched in 2013. To date, 601 schools have been built, 80 per cent of which meet all accessibility criteria on their ground floor.

109. Resources for accessibility are allocated in coordination with the Student Welfare Institute (INABIE) through the Centros de Atención a la Diversidad and for visual impairment through the Centro Nacional Olga Estrella.

110. The resources provided are:

Table 2
Resources for accessibility

Form of disability	*Resources*	*Human resources*
Hearing impairment	Hearing assessment Hearing aids, if needed	Interpreter to facilitate participation in secondary education (Primary: In schools specifically for deaf persons, sign language support (deaf persons with an excellent command of sign language))
Limited mobility	Wheelchairs	
Visual impairment	Braille textbooks Audio textbooks Cane Abacus and materials for writing in Braille Visual aids for students with low vision	Visiting teacher

Form of disability	*Resources*	*Human resources*
Autism spectrum disorders	Aids adapted with pictograms	School psychologist
	Positive behaviour modification programmes (where necessary)	Teacher to facilitate transition to inclusive education
	Tablets (only in special classes for inclusive education)	
Intellectual		Support teacher for inclusive education

P. Health (art. 25)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 25 of the list of issues

Information on policies and measures taken to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to health services, in particular, community-based health services

111. Part of the Government's programme for 2012–2016 includes identifying priorities for the health sector, such as support for persons with disabilities.

112. A new model of health care that focuses on primary care is in place; it promotes comprehensive care at the community level and in health facilities closest to peoples' places of residence.

113. The National Council for Social Security (CNSS) agreed, by way of Resolution No. 212-02 of 2009, to the direct inclusion of low-income persons with disabilities in the subsidized Family Health-Insurance Programme. They are enrolled via the Dominican Social Security System (SDSS) subsidized national health insurance regime.

114. The 2013 national household survey found that 58.7 per cent of persons with disabilities have some sort of medical or health insurance. It is important to compare this figure with the percentage of persons without disabilities who have medical or health insurance, which is 53.2 per cent, according to data from the same survey. Compared to persons without disabilities, a higher percentage of persons with visual (62.3 per cent), psychomotor (61.1 per cent) and hearing (57.8 per cent) impairments have insurance, while a lower percentage of persons with speech-related (41.2 per cent) and intellectual (44.9 per cent) disabilities have insurance.

Number of gynaecological clinics with accessible examination facilities and sign language interpreters, and accessible sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV/AIDS services

115. Most public health services have gynaecological and obstetrical units that provide fixed services for persons with disabilities; however, not all facilities are accessible.

116. The Ministry of Public Health has a programme that establishes standards and guidelines on support for persons with disabilities nationwide.

117. Generally speaking, health centres do not have sign language interpreters; however, following a civil society initiative with support from CONADIS, the Juan Pablo Pina municipal hospital of San Cristobal became the first to add two interpreters to its staff in order to improve care for deaf persons.

118. The Ministry of Public Health is currently building and refurbishing 56 new hospitals throughout the country. CONADIS monitors compliance with accessibility standards in these hospitals. In that regard, it has contacted the design department of the Engineering Directorate to ensure that accessibility requirements are taken into account in the hospital designs. Moreover, technical staff, designers and officials from the private monitoring body received training on, inter alia, monitoring and guaranteeing accessibility. They were given the guide on physical accessibility in order to ensure its implementation.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 26 of the list of issues

119. While the Ministry of Public Health has a programme of fixed-price medication for persons in need, especially those with the lowest incomes, special arrangements are necessary for medication for persons with disabilities to be included in the programme.

120. The first step has been the agreement between the Fundación de Lesionados Medulares (Spinal Cord Injury Foundation) (FUPLLEM) and the Essential Drugs Programme/Logistics Support Unit (PROMESE/CAL) to import medication and products for spinal cord injuries so that they can be distributed at local pharmacies for free or at a very low cost.

Q. Habilitation and rehabilitation (art. 26)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 of the list of issues

121. The basic health-care strategy, a health policy adopted under Acts Nos. 42-01 and 87-01 governing health and social security in the Dominican Republic, is based on levels of care and community participation and provides treatment for patients without discrimination. Rehabilitation services, including those offered in private establishments approved by the Ministry of Health, are funded by the Ministry of Health through the Family Health-Insurance Programme.

122. Primary health-care workers in the five border regions have been trained in community-based rehabilitation, through a project developed by CONADIS and the Ministry of Health with the support of the Pan American Health Organization. The aim is to facilitate access to habilitation and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities living in these remote areas with a large Haitian population, to which services are guaranteed without any form of discrimination.

R. Work and employment (art. 27)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 28 of the list of issues

123. Article 14 of the Organic Act on Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 5-13 provides for employment quotas of 5 per cent in the public sector and 2 per cent in the private sector. In this regard, and pending completion of the consultations on the Act's implementing regulations, CONADIS has been coordinating efforts to develop and evaluate public policies that promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

124. The Occupational Inclusion Department of CONADIS has arranged for some 84 jobs of different categories, including permanent, temporary and outsourced. Personnel were hired for their competencies and skills.

125. The employees of different public institutions have attended awareness-raising workshops at which the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities were explained to them.

Some 35 institutions from different parts of the public sector, each represented by its head of human resources, took part in these workshops.

126. Suitable training courses for persons with disabilities and which also meet their needs have been organized, so that they may choose decent employment or keep the job they already have.

127. According to data provided by the Technical and Vocational Training Institute (INFOTEP), 1,496 persons with disabilities throughout the country were given training in different fields in 2013 and 2014. With that figure, the Institute exceeded its forecasts for training those persons by more than 200 per cent. Much of the training was done in the context of cooperation between CONADIS and the institute, which set joint goals for every year.

128. The table below shows the data provided by INFOTEP.

Table 3
INFOTEP-CONADIS goals

Aggregate, January–December 2013

Indicators	*2013 target*	*Running total implemented*	*Percentage implemented*
Hours of instruction	1 185	4 654	393
Training initiatives	16	47	294
Participants	400	822	206

Aggregate, January–November 2014

Indicators	*2014 target*	*Running total implemented*	*Percentage implemented*
Hours of instruction	1 600	3 468	217
Training initiatives	20	38	190
Participants	360	674	187

Note: These targets and achievements are attributable to the Central Regional Administration.

129. On another front, talks on workplace inclusion, targeting both the public and private sectors, have been given in different settings. This is to provide an introduction to the legal framework surrounding inclusion in the workplace and to present persons with disabilities as individuals with the right to be fully included in society, especially in the area of work and production.

130. In addition, the Traveling Bazaar Programme, the starting point of which is the identification of the talents and skills of persons with disabilities for the production of handicrafts and common utensils serves to promote self-employment. The bazaars are held in public and private institutions as a means of enabling persons with disabilities to introduce, promote and market their products, thereby helping effectively include them in the labour market. With the cooperation of the Directorate-General for Public Purchasing and Procurement, efforts have been and continue to be made to encourage artisans to register as State suppliers in order to gain access to another market, in which no less than 20 per cent of public purchases are made from micro-businesses and small or medium-sized companies.

131. Civil society organizations have held awareness-raising breakfasts and a job fair for persons with disabilities.

132. The Central Electoral Board has created more jobs than any other institution. To date, it has brought in some 58 persons with disabilities to help issue identity documents. Five persons with disabilities are employed at headquarters. For several reasons, working in the private sector and in some public agencies is still complicated: the fear of employing persons with disabilities, the lack of guidance on suitable jobs, the lack of a political stance or will with respect to creating employment options in the sector and the low educational levels of persons with disabilities.

133. Progress has been made by raising awareness among employers and building the capacity of the private sector, but follow-up, oversight and adoption of the implementing regulations of Act No. 5-13 are required before demands can be made to include more persons with disabilities on employer payrolls.

S. Adequate standard of living and social protection (art. 28)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 29 of the list of issues

Data on persons with disabilities living in poverty, and the measures taken to include them in poverty-reduction strategies

134. In the Single System of Beneficiaries (SIUBEN) database there are 6,999,858 persons in priority areas I and II of the poverty map, 1.7 per cent of whom — or 122,341 persons — reported an impairment.

135. Of the persons who reported an impairment, 15.2 per cent, or 18,611, fall under the category that reflects the highest incidence of unsatisfied basic needs (Quality of Life Index 1); 51.2 per cent, or 71,256, are categorized under Quality of Life Index 2; 25.4 per cent, or 31,037, under Quality of Life Index 3; and 1.2 per cent, or 1,437 persons, under Quality of Life Index 4.

136. In summary, 73.5 per cent of those who reported an impairment, or 89,867 persons, are in the lower tiers of the Quality of Life Index. These persons are included in Progress with Solidarity, a programme of conditional cash transfers.

137. In addition, the Directorate-General for Special Programmes is implementing the National Literacy Plan, which includes a specialized component for persons with disabilities, based on the principle that education is the tool to break the cycle of poverty. Access to vocational training is provided to the newly literate to give them an opportunity to find decent employment, thereby improving in their quality of life.

Information on the support provided to offset the additional costs of living due to disability, such as disability subsidies

138. As an institution whose aim is to target social policy in the Dominican Republic, the Single System of Beneficiaries provides the database of beneficiaries eligible for the different social programmes, to ensure that social assistance is provided to those most in need of it. The names of the persons eligible are listed with all the socioeconomic information included in their files.

139. At present, because social benefits are granted only to households that qualify on the basis of their score on the Quality of Life Index, plans are being made for the various programmes to add special social benefits for persons with physical disabilities to their activities, in cooperation with the other agencies of the Social Policy Office.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 30 of the list of issues

Consideration of the specific needs of children and adolescents with disabilities in conditional cash transfers and the provision of nutritional supplements

140. As noted, the Single System of Beneficiaries categorizes households by need, as measured by the Quality of Life Index. If a household is in need, and if one of its members also has a disability or a health problem, its vulnerability is exacerbated. For that reason, work on a new indicator (the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative's multidimensional poverty index), is under way to ensure that these human factors disregarded by the current Quality of Life Index, because of its highly statistical character, are reflected in the measures of deprivation used by the Single System of Beneficiaries.

141. In conjunction with policies involving the interaction of the institutions that work for persons with disabilities, this tool will make it possible to enhance the quality of life of these persons.

Number of children and adolescents with disabilities who are benefitting from the "Comer es primero" (CEP) and the "Chispitas solidarias" components of the Solidarity programme

142. In the SIUBEN database, there are 18,168 children and adolescents with a reported impairment living in 17,331 households.

143. It should be noted that the "Comer es primero" Programme benefits households with high levels of deprivation. At the national level, of the 17,331 households with at least one child 17 years of age or younger who has a physical impairment, 37.3 per cent, or 6,775, receive benefits from the programme.

144. The benefits of the "Chispitas solidarias" component accrue to all the households taking part in the Progress with Solidarity Programme in which there is at least one child aged from 6 months to 5 years and/or a pregnant woman. This initiative seeks to provide the nutrition necessary for the proper development of the target population.

T. Participation in political and public life (art. 29)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 31 of the list of issues

Accessibility compliance during elections, including accessibility to election-related information and to voting stations

145. For the 2012 elections, the Central Electoral Board, in coordination with CONADIS, gave head polling officers training in the proper treatment of persons with disabilities and their right to vote. The training included full information on the voting process.

146. An agreement was reached whereby wheelchair users and persons with reduced mobility who vote in facilities with architectural barriers will be helped by a person designated for that purpose by the head polling officer.

147. Similarly, Braille ballet papers were used for blind persons, as in previous years.

148. For the 2016 elections, the entire system will be tailored and organized to make it easier for persons with disabilities to exercise their right to vote. Assisted voting will be provided for sick people who are in clinics and hospitals.

149. A programme to make polling places accessible, with the installation of ramps, signage and other accessibility elements, will be implemented by the Ministry of Public Works and Communications.

150. As in the past, a leaflet with information about the right to vote of persons with disabilities will be sent to polling stations.

Number of persons with disabilities who have been elected to public office, including their level of participation in political organizations and in civil society organizations

151. Currently there are no members of Congress with disabilities. There are some municipal councillors with disabilities, but the relevant information is not yet systematically available.

152. In addition, persons with disabilities participate very actively and quite widely in public and civil society organizations. The national board of CONADIS benefits from the broad participation of representatives of organizations of and for persons with disabilities. The members of the board are as follows (Act No. 5-13, art. 33):

1. The chief executive of CONADIS, who shall chair it;

2. The Minister of the Office of the President or his or her representative;

3. The Minister of Health or his or her representative;

4. The Minister of Education or his or her representative;

5. The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology or his or her representative;

6. The Minister of the Economy, Planning and Development or his or her representative;

7. The director of the Technical and Vocational Training Institute or his or her representative;

8. The Minister of Labour or his or her representative;

9. The director of the National Social Security Council or his or her representative;

10. The Minister of Public Works and Communications or his or her representative;

11. The Minister of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation or his or her representative;

12. The Director-General for Ground Transportation, who may speak but not vote;

13. Two representatives of institutions for persons with visual disabilities;

14. Two representatives of institutions for persons with hearing impairments;

15. Two representatives of institutions for persons with motor and physical disabilities;

16. Two representatives of associations of parents or guardians of persons with mental or intellectual disabilities;

17. Two representatives of institutions providing services to people with visual disabilities;

18. Two representatives of institutions providing services to people with hearing impairments;

19. Two representatives of institutions providing services to persons with motor and physical disabilities;

20. Two representatives of institutions providing services to persons with mental or intellectual disabilities;

21. One representative of institutions for persons with multiple disabilities;

22. One representative of an organization concerned with gender issues;

23. One representative of an institution that covers various disabilities;

24. One representative, who may speak but not vote, of networks or federations of institutions for persons with disabilities;

25. The executive director, who may speak but not vote;

26. One representative of each of the country's Regional Development Councils, who may speak but not vote, in accordance with the territorial division adopted by the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Development for the operation of those councils.

153. The Association of Persons with Physical and Motor Disabilities coordinates the work of the advisory board of the Social Policy Office. Persons with disabilities are represented in Congress and on the National Social Security Council. In addition, the current Minister of Education is a person with a disability.

154. In the most recent elections, organizations of and for persons with disabilities were candidates for seats on the board of the Centre for the Promotion of Non-profit Organizations (in accordance with Act No. 122-05) but were not elected. The centre is the institution that ensures that public monies are transferred to non-profit associations, many of which work for people with disabilities.

155. CONADIS is currently completing an institutional diagnosis to determine the number, geographical distribution and level of support of those associations.

U. Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (art. 30)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 32 of the list of issues

Steps taken for the expeditious signing and ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

156. The Marrakesh Treaty was signed by the Dominican Republic on 28 June 2013.

157. Over the course of the current year, the State has been taking part in and acting as the host of a regional meeting of Latin American countries which focused on promoting ratification of the treaty.

158. The objective of the regional meeting was to analyse the content of the treaty and its implications for audiovisual performances.

159. In the Pedro Henríquez Ureña National Library and the Dominican Children's Library, a department provides services to people with disabilities and is responsible for ensuring access to books by distributing audiobooks. Research support is also offered to persons with disabilities.

160. The Dominican Foundation for the Blind and the National Educational Resources Centre have small specialized libraries for persons with visual disabilities.

161. Nationwide, there are two Braille printing houses for the adaptation of publication and books.

Implementation of accessibility measures for tourist attractions, historical monuments and other cultural sites.

162. Awareness is being raised and training conducted through workshops on universal accessibility, accessible tourism and decent treatment of persons with disabilities. The workshops are held in tourist locations around the country, in coordination with the associations of hotel owners, which bring together the main attractions of the destinations:

- La Romana Bayahibe Hotel Association: workshop held with management and service personnel of the tourism hub in Bávaro, Dominican Beach Hotel;
- Santo Domingo tourism hub: workshop held with key representatives from the business sector, local tourist offices, the security services and the office of the mayor of the National District, of which the Colonial City forms part, in the Old Town Hall.

163. Tourism is more than sun and sand, and for that reason efforts have recently focused on the agreements, joint operations and consultations necessary for the private and public sectors to promote a more socially responsible form of tourism. The agreements include those signed with the Dominican Consortium for Tourism Competitiveness to monitor the follow-up and coordination required to lay out the first accessible path in the Dominican Republic, the Path of the Senses, which is located in the Dominican National Botanical Garden. The path has signs in embossed and Braille printing, video guides in sign language and a slope that never exceeds the upper limit of 8 per cent established in national standards

164. Specific initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Culture, which provides video guides to facilitate visits by persons with hearing impairments in many of its museums. The Ministry of Tourism, for its part, has implemented a project to make improvements to the Colonial City of Santo Domingo. As part of the project, international specifications to ensure access and enjoyment by all people, regardless of their disability, are being studied.

165. Another significant related development concerned the Environmental Law Institute of the Dominican Republic, whose members are the local representatives of the Blue Flag Programme eco-label, which guarantees that beaches throughout the country are healthy and soundly managed. It has also encouraged CONADIS to join its Evaluation Committee, making it possible to include accessibility criteria as a fundamental part of the evaluation. There are currently 21 accessible beaches in the eastern and northern regions of the country.

166. In general, CONADIS promotes nationwide implementation of accessible tourism not only as a market niche but also as a model for inclusive development. One relevant forthcoming action is a global conference on accessible tourism.

III. Special obligations

A. Statistics and data collection (art. 31)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 33 of the list of issues

Updated information on the results of the national census taken in 2010, disaggregated by sex, age, rural and urban areas, and on the current situation of the national statistics system on disability

167. According to data from the ninth national population and housing census, taken by the National Statistical Office in 2010, 12.3 per cent of the Dominican population is living with a disability (1,160,847 persons). A total of 56 per cent were female, while the remaining 44 per cent were male.

168. As to the ages of persons with disabilities, 8.1 per cent were between 0 and 14 years of age (in comparison with 29.7 per cent of the general population), 65.9 per cent were between 15 and 64 years (in comparison with 64 per cent of the general population) and 26 per cent were 65 years and over (compared to 6.2 per cent of the general population).

169. Urban areas are home to the majority of persons with disabilities (73.4 per cent). This is not surprising, given that persons with disabilities live in the more densely populated provinces.

170. It was found that 22.9 per cent of persons with disabilities over 15 years of age did not know how to read and write. Similarly, 21.2 per cent of those between the ages of 5 and 17 years had never attended school. These percentages are significantly higher than those for the population of the country as a whole, which are 12.8 and 8.8 per cent respectively.

171. In addition to the information from the 2010 census, information on disabilities was collected in 2013 through the national multipurpose household survey (ENHOGAR 2013), which had a specific section on disability, and the demographic and health survey (ENDESA 2013), which included questions on disability. Information concerning the 2013 household survey is presented in the section immediately below, whereas the information relating to the 2013 demographic and health survey is being re-examined, as the core focus of the general report, published in late 2014, neglects disability, meaning that more thorough analysis is called for.

172. Plans were made with the National Statistical Office for regular updates (every four years) of disability surveys.

173. In addition, CONADIS has been working to set up a national system for registering persons with disabilities that includes several components: voluntary registration in the municipalities, digital registration and registration campaigns.

Information on the national multipurpose household survey taken in 2013

174. The national household survey taken by the National Statistical Office since 2005 is a nationwide survey that collects information on various subjects. It includes core sections that are reproduced year after year (on housing, the household and its members) and sections that vary from one year to the next, so as to cover important aspects of the situation in the country. In 2013, one of the sections was on disability, making it possible to analyse the phenomenon in detail.

175. Responses to the questionnaire on disabilities were valid if they came from:

- A person 10 years of age or older who has been diagnosed with a disability and is capable of answering the interview;
- If the respondent is a person 10 years of age or older with a disability of who is unable to take part in the interview, or a person 9 years of age or younger, a suitable informant is sought: (a) the mother or guardian, (b) a father or guardian, (c) the spouse, (d) a son or daughter, (e) a sibling, (f) a niece or nephew, (g) an aunt or uncle, (h) another family member, (i) an unrelated person or (j) a nurse.

176. The number of housing units to be visited is determined by the resources available for the survey. As part of the survey, visits were paid to a sample of 27,000 selected housing units subdivided into 1,500 primary sampling units or census blocks. Information was obtained on all households, up to a maximum of five, in each housing unit. As a result, the sample contained 27,000 housing units from all parts of the country, for an actual sample size of 26,029 housing units and 26,059 households. The total number of people interviewed was 89,240. This means that the response rate for the randomly selected housing units was 96.4 per cent, a non-response rate of only 3.6 per cent.

177. Information was collected over 71 days, starting on 2 July 2013 and continuing until 11 September of the same year. Field personnel included a field operations manager, 8 national supervisors, 2 quality assurance managers, 24 team supervisors, 24 staff responsible for updating data and 71 interviewers.

178. The survey yielded the following findings on disability.

Table 4

National multipurpose household survey data

Place of residence

	Number	*Percentage*
Urban	524 588	74
Rural	183 880	26
Total	**708 468**	**100**

Planning regions

	Number	*Percentage*
Cibao North	85 831	12.1
Cibao South	51 952	7.3
Cibao North-East	42 536	6.0
Cibao North-West	35 810	5.1
Valdesia	78 940	11.1
Enriquillo	25 769	3.6
El Valle	22 521	3.2
Del Yuma	51 814	7.3
Higuamo	53 651	7.6
Metropolitan	259 644	36.6
Total	**708 468**	**100**

Family socioeconomic group

	Number	*Percentage*	*Running percentage*
Very low	53 115	7.5	7.5
Low	95 461	13.5	21
Medium low	188 644	26.6	47.6
Medium	262 530	37.1	84.7
Upper medium high	108 718	15.3	100
Total	**708 468**	**100**	

Man's or woman's name?

	Number	*Percentage*
Man's	366 685	51.8
Woman's	341 783	48.2
Total	**708 468**	**100**

Age of the person (by age range)?

		Number	*Percentage*	*Running percentage*
	0–4	9 604	1.4	1.4
	5–9	15 358	2.2	3.5
	10–14	29 369	4.1	7.7
	15–19	28 493	4.0	11.7
	20–24	30 277	4.3	16.0
	25–29	30 213	4.3	20.2
	30–34	37 461	5.3	25.5
	35–39	34 525	4.9	30.4
	40–44	44 643	6.3	36.7
	45–49	40 795	5.8	42.5
	50–54	50 850	7.2	49.6
	55–59	53 865	7.6	57.2
	60–64	48 516	6.8	64.1
	65–69	57 197	8.1	72.2
	70–74	53 349	7.5	79.7
	75–79	51 195	7.2	86.9
	80–84	42 688	6.0	92.9
	85–89	24 438	3.4	96.4
	90–94	15 793	2.2	98.6
	95+	9 802	1.4	100
Total		**708 431**	**100**	
Lost	Unknown	37	0	
Total		**708 468**	**100**	

B. National implementation and monitoring (art. 33)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 34 of the list of issues

179. The Dominican civil society organizations involved in disability issues have prepared a shadow report on the implementation of the Convention to complement the information provided by the Government and ensure the existence of independent monitoring mechanisms.

180. The National Network for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which brings together civil society organizations of and for persons with disabilities, was created in 2011 with a view to following up the implementation of the Convention.

181. An observatory on the implementation of the Convention, a tool designed directly to collect, systematize and organize indicators and information has also been created. It promotes social oversight and advocacy, in addition to encouraging transparency and compliance with the Convention.

182. The observatory seeks also to help extend the political influence of organizations of persons with disabilities with a view to shaping inclusive public policies to improve the lives of this part of the population by developing mechanisms to monitor the current status of the Dominican State's compliance with the Convention.

183. CONADIS is completing a survey and diagnosis of the organizations of and for persons with disabilities in order to develop a plan to strengthen them and enable them to fulfil their important oversight role with regard to the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities.